

GOD, LET ME BREATHE

Written by

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INT. SCHOOL BATHROOM

Carolina is pacing in the school bathroom, trying to steady her breathing and not have a panic attack. While she is holding her tears.

CAROLINA
(inhales, counting using
her fingers)
One, two...three, four,
five...six...seven, eight.
(exhales, panicking)
One, two, three...four. It's okay.
I am okay. I am calm. It's fine.
All is fine.

Carolina holds onto the sink with both hands. She looks at herself, fake smiles. Then drops her smile and wears it back on before she goes out of the bathroom.

The door creaks and closes shut leaving the cold bathroom empty and silent with only a water drop sound filling it.

EXT. SCHOOL HALLWAY

School bell rings. Carolina walks through the empty halls with a couple of people hanging around. They stare at Carolina. While she is leading her way to the school counselor's office.

Carolina finally arrives at the door of the counselor's room. She takes a deep breath and knocks. Counselor Miss Taylor calls out from inside the room.

COUNSELOR TAYLOR
(calls out, kindly)
Come in, come in!

HARD CUT TO:

INT. COUNSELOR'S ROOM

Carolina is sitting in front of the counselor while Miss Taylor is trying to find Carolina's file. Carolina is tapping her fingers onto the chair, counting her inhales and exhales, unbeknownst. Miss Taylor finally finds her file.

COUNSELOR TAYLOR
(slightly disappointed)
You are late...again.

CAROLINA
Yes. Sorry about that I was just-

COUNSELOR TAYLOR
 No worries. Let's just start.
 (clears her throat)
 Here we go. I see here that we
 haven't talked for three weeks.

CAROLINA
 (inhales)
 I have been busy-

COUNSELOR TAYLOR
 (writes down to the file)
 Too busy for your mental health? We
 have to work that.

CAROLINA
 (annoyed)
 I'm not. It's just school. Its exam
 and performance task season. I
 can't just drop everything and
 focus on me.

COUNSELOR TAYLOR
 So, you don't spare time to
 yourself? No me time.
 (She hums knowingly and
 continue writing)
 Are things okay at home?

CAROLINA
 (bluntly)
 Yes.

COUNSELOR TAYLOR
 Are you sure?

CAROLINA
 (Her right leg starts to
 shake)
 Yes. Why? Its normal. Like always.
 Good.

COUNSELOR TAYLOR
 Are you still having problems with
 your mother?

CAROLINA
 (murmurs angrily)
 I'm not having problems with my
 mother.

COUNSELOR TAYLOR
So, she approves of you pressuring
yourself to a point where you
eventually hold your breath?

CAROLINA
(exhales)
I don't hold my breath.

COUNSELOR TAYLOR
You just exhaled the breathe you
inhaled when you first came here.
But that's just my observation
Carolina.

Miss Taylor writes on the file and spots Carolina's fingers,
counting. She turns her gaze at Carolina.

COUNSELOR TAYLOR
And how long has this been going
on?

CAROLINA
(slightly panicked and
annoyed)
What?

COUNSELOR TAYLOR
(leans towards Carolina
behind the desk)
Tapping your fingers, counting your
breathing...Are you sure about not
having trouble breathing?

CAROLINA
(pauses)
I...

Carolina drops her chin to her chest and doesn't answer the
question or more like she doesn't know how to.

FADE OUT.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY

Miss Taylor and Carolina stands, face to face in front of
the counselor's office door.

COUNSELOR TAYLOR
(hands over a white paper
slip to Carolina)
You can give this to any of your
teachers and come see Miss Taylor.
You can see me anytime.

Carolina takes the slip without saying anything to Miss Taylor and place her headphones on both ears, as she walks she crumbles the slip into a ball in her fist. She drops the white crumbled paper in her jean pocket.

She jumps when someone embraces her from behind. She takes out her headphones and stares at her boyfriend, Kevin.

KEVIN
(smiling)
Hey. Sorry I scared you.

CAROLINA
(smiling weakly)
Hi. Its okay.

KEVIN
(He throws his arm around
her shoulder)
So, I have been thinking...There is
a party.

CAROLINA
(asks unsurprised)
A party?

KEVIN
(nods)
Yes. Jason's party.

CAROLINA
And when is this...party?

KEVIN
Friday.

CAROLINA
(raises her eyebrows)
Friday, Today?

KEVIN
(smiles)
Maybe? Yes.

CAROLINA
(nods, disappointed)
Kevin.

KEVIN
(smiles trying to be
cute)
What?

CAROLINA
You know I can't.

KEVIN
Why? Why not? Give me a good reason
for saying no to the fun.

CAROLINA
I have to-

KEVIN
(fakes his excitement)
Study!

CAROLINA
Yes. Study. Next week is exam week,
Kevin. I have to study.

JASON
(calls out across the
corridor)
Hey, Kev! Come on man.

KEVIN
I have to go now. Promise me,
you'll at least think about it?

CAROLINA
I will think about it.

Kevin kisses Carolina's forehead and rushes next to Jason.
Meanwhile the bell rings for the last class and Carolina
goes into a classroom.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM

Carolina is sitting on one of the front row seats. Mr. Lottie
hands Carolina her marked paper.

MR. LOTTIE
Carolina, I am disappointed. Its
obviously not your best work.

Carolina holds the white test paper with red marks on it.
She spots the big C minus on her paper.

Her neck tightens and she stares at her grade in shock. She stops the teacher before Mr. Lottie walks away from her desk.

CAROLINA

(in shock)

Wait. But Mr. Lottie, I worked so hard for this test. I stayed at home every night, I memorized everything!

MR. LOTTIE

Then you didn't work hard enough, Carolina.

CAROLINA

No! But-

MR. LOTTIE

(offended)

No buts, Carolina.

(turns towards the class)

This test is really similar to the exam. So, my advice is to stop the excuses! Sit down, study, memorize.

(turns back to Carolina)

And don't blame me for your laziness. Understood?

A murmur fills the classroom. Carolina sits with a numb expression the whole class and the only noise she makes is the tapping of her fingertips to the desk.

INT. GOLD FAMILY'S HOUSE

Carolina is walking to her family home. She sees a big friend group walking, having fun on the other side of the road. A boy has his arm around a girl. After staring at them, she walks inside of her family home. The house is quiet. Nobody is home.

CAROLINA

Mom?

She goes up to the stairs.

CUT TO:

INT. CAROLINA'S ROOM

Carolina closes off her phone. She walks around her room until sunset with a notebook in her hand, trying to memorize the test. Carolina gets stressed every passing minute.

She bites her nails, pulls on her hair, counts her breathing, talking to herself, swallowing the cries that are trying to get out.

CAROLINA
(pats her head with both
hands)
Work. Work, for God's sake!

House bell rings once. Nobody answers. Bell rings twice.

CUT TO:

INT. GOLD FAMILY'S HOUSE ENTRANCE

Carolina goes down the stairs irritated. She opens the door. Kevin is standing in front of the door, leaning to the archway.

KEVIN
Hey. You still haven't changed?

CAROLINA
(annoyed)
What? Kevin, what are you doing
here?

KEVIN
(confused)
What do you mean why are you here?
Remember...The party?

CAROLINA
What party? Jason's party?

KEVIN
Yes, yes. Exactly. Come on, we can
still make it on time if you change
now.

CAROLINA
What? No. I didn't say anything
about going.

Kevin steps inside, facing Carolina under the dim light of the house entrance.

KEVIN
Carolina. What's happening?

CAROLINA
Nothing.

KEVIN

It's not nothing! You have been in this weird mood for a long time now and I waited and waited for you to come out of it but...

(inhales)

It looks like you are not going to.

CAROLINA

(angrily)

I'm not in a weird mood! I am stressed okay? I am so stressed. And just because I don't want to go to a stupid party doesn't mean I am weird!

KEVIN

I'm not even talking about the party. Screw the party! I am talking about you. You used to talk to me when you were stressed. Just talk to me!

CAROLINA

(sadly)

Why would I talk to you? You are not even listening to me right now.

Mom appears in the corridor when she hears their shouts.

MOM

Carolina? Honey, what's going on?

CAROLINA

Nothing, mom. Kevin was just leaving.

KEVIN

(with a sad smile on his face)

I guess I was.

Carolina steps back and lets Kevin lead his way out. They avoid looking at each other and Kevin rushes out. Meanwhile, mom comes close to Carolina. She gently touches Carolina's shoulder.

MOM

(softly)

Honey, are you okay?

CAROLINA

(with a shaky voice)

No. I'm not.

Caroline turns to her mom and falls into her arms, first time in a very long time she starts sobbing.

THE CAMERA GETS FURTHER UNTIL FADE TO BLACK

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. CAROLINA'S ROOM

Carolina wakes up in her room in the middle of the night. She is sweating. She opens the window of her room. She looks up at the stars and the moon, talks to them.

CAROLINA

(smiles)

O stars, if only one of you fell
right before my eyes and I could
make a shooting star wish. And
maybe God, would let me breathe.

Carolina's room door opens slowly. Mom comes in to check on her.

MOM

Carolina?

CAROLINA

Mom?

MOM

Are you feeling alright?

CAROLINA

(nervous laugh)

People have been asking this
question to me so often now, that I
don't know how to answer it.

MOM

Answer according to how you feel. I
mean if you don't, I will still see
the truth.

(smiles)

I'm your mother.

CAROLINA

Mom? Can we talk? Like old times?

(CLOSE UP)MOM SMILING AT CAROLINA.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GARDEN

THE STARS SHINNING ON THE NIGHT SKY.

Mom and Carolina laying down on the patio couch, bundled up in blankets, hugging each other. Mom is playing with Carolina's hair.

MOM

(feeling guilty)

I'm so sorry that I haven't been helping you.

CAROLINA

Mom, don't say sorry. Its not your fault. Its just...the system.

MOM

I know the school system and life is overall corrupted, but I should be more caring towards you.

CAROLINA

I mean I didn't really shared anything with you, about what I was going through. I didn't want to bother you. You have work and...

(exhales)

You keep track on my school work and social life. You do a lot for me.

MOM

O, sweet Carolina. You could never bother me. I will always be right here, with you. No matter what. Do you know that?

CAROLINA

I do, mom.

MOM

And not just me. There are people who are reaching out to you, want to help you. Let them be with you. Don't isolate yourself from love and care.

CAROLINA

I just feel like if I get help and let them help me, I will accept that I am weak.

MOM

Trust me, Carolina. You are not weak. You can be. You can be anything. We all have every possibility in us.

(pauses)

Look, reaching out to the people who cares about you doesn't make you look weak. It shows how lucky you are to have people that love you in your life.

CAROLINA

What if things go wrong and they don't understand me? I would end up alone.

MOM

If things ever go wrong in any way, still I will be here. I know you have this internal pressure towards yourself. You want to be perfect. But God doesn't create us to be perfect. So, why would we pressure ourselves to be something not even God can make possible?

(Turns to look at Carolina)

And I don't expect anything from you. Not in school, not in life. Except one thing.

CAROLINA

(smiles)

Getting good grades?

MOM

Being happy. And healthy.

Carolina's eyes tear up, she wipes them with her sleeve. Mom kisses and inhales the top of Carolina's head.

MOM

Just be happy, Carolina. Be happy and breathe.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY

Carolina walks towards Kevin in the school hallway. Kevin is standing next to the lockers, talking with Jason.

CAROLINA
(smiles sadly)
Hi.

Kevin glances at Carolina. Then at Jason and Jason leaves.
Kevin avoids eye contact with Carolina.

KEVIN
(looking down)
Hey.

CAROLINA
I'm sorry.

CAROLINA
I know you care. I know you are
here for me. And you don't only
care about parties.

Kevin meets Carolina's eyes.

KEVIN
(seriously)
I didn't go to that party.

CAROLINA
Sorry. I know you really wanted to
go.

KEVIN
Next to you, I don't care about any
party or anything at all. I just
want to be there for you. I'm
sorry.

CAROLINA
For what?

KEVIN
For not noticing how stressed you
are and for suffocating you even
more.

CAROLINA
Its okay. I can breathe now.

Kevin and Carolina hugs each other.

FADE OUT.

INT. CLASSROOM

Mr. Lottie is writing on the board while everyone is taking
notes. Carolina starts tapping on the table.

She notices her actions then starts to search her pockets. She finds the crumbled white counselor sheet. She raises her hand holding the white sheet.

CAROLINA

May I be excused to see Miss
Taylor? I have a pass.

Mr. Lottie gives a disappointed look, exhales and turns his head to the door. Carolina breathes and smiles.

HARD CUT TO:

BLACK SCREEN.

